

**The Bill Blackwood  
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

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**Effectiveness of Twelve-Hour Patrol Shifts**

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**An Administrative Research Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
Required for Graduation from the  
Leadership Command College**

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**By  
David Torres**

**Galveston Police Department  
Galveston, Texas  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The issue regarding whether or not 12-hour shifts are more beneficial than eight-hour shifts is a topic currently plaguing police departments that are facing manpower issues, morale problems and budgetary constraints. Police administrators today must juggle all three of these issues and question whether implementing 12-hour shifts is a viable solution to these problems. The information retrieved in order to discover a solution to these issues was gathered from various periodicals, journals, articles, and surveys distributed to a consortium of both patrol officers and police supervisors. The result of this research demonstrates that the implementation of 12-hour shifts improves morale and assists in alleviating manpower problems and budgetary issues. For instance, the research proposes that the implementation of 12-hour shifts improves morale by affording the patrol officer more time away from work to spend with family and friends. The execution of 12-hour shifts can also alleviate manpower problems by dividing three eight-hour shifts into four 12-hour shifts, while simultaneously utilizing multiple "lap over" units/officers. Finally, putting into operation 12-hour shifts also assists the city and county with budgetary issues regarding overtime when proper utilization of the "lap over" is implemented. By appropriately implementing 12-hour shifts, an agency can alleviate at least some of the morale issues, manpower deficiencies and budgetary restraints experienced by a majority of law enforcement agencies in today's society. Ultimately, the successful employment of 12-hour shifts will rely on the total manpower of a given department, as well as the acceptance experienced by the patrol officers of departments if the morale is to be improved.

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## INTRODUCTION

In an attempt to resolve the increased manpower shortages and low officer morale problems, law enforcement leaders have begun to pursue alternative shift schedules that would increase manpower while at the same time resolve the officer morale problems. When thinking about law enforcement patrol shift schedules, it is normal to think of the traditional five-day workweek with eight-hour work shifts with two days off. The shift length is an integral part of the overall patrol schedule. In recent years law enforcement leaders have been faced with increased manpower shortages along with low officer morale that has resulted from the shortages. One alternative shift schedule being evaluated by many law enforcement leaders is replacing the traditional eight-hour patrol schedule for a 12-hour patrol schedule.

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of law enforcement agencies switching from the eight hour patrol shift schedules to the 12-hour patrol shift schedule and if such a switch would in fact resolve the manpower shortages and officer morale problems. This research is also intended to assist law enforcement agencies that are currently operating under the traditional eight hour patrol shift schedule make an informed decision in regards to replacing the traditional eight hour patrol shift with the increasing popular compressed 12-hour patrol shift schedule.

The method of inquiry to be used in this research will include surveys, and published articles in professional law enforcement journals, books, government publications and Internet websites. The intended result of the research is to determine if making the switch by law enforcement agencies from the traditional eight hour patrol schedule to the more compressed 12-hour patrol schedule is beneficial not only in

answering the question of manpower shortages, but also its effects on officer morale. Along with showing that switching from the traditional eight hour patrol schedule to the 12-hour patrol schedule will have a great impact on law enforcement agencies by placing more officers on duty to address the manpower shortages while at the same time improving the overall officer morale.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

One of the biggest innovations in shift schedules over the last 20 years has been the resurgence of longer shifts, especially 12-hour shifts (Shiftwork Solutions, 2005). The invention of the light bulb has been credited with the conception of shift work because companies could work employees longer hours, thus requiring fewer employees needed (Shiftwork Solutions, 2005). The 12-hour shift then ceased once labor laws requiring overtime compensation for more than eight hours worked in a shift, and more than 40 hours worked in a week (Shiftwork Solutions, 2005). There has been a resurgence of the 12-hour shift in the recent past. Companies are able to work their employee's longer hours per day with fewer days per week without exceeding the 40-hour workweek, or the more popular 80-hour pay period. Working fewer days in a pay period has its advantages for the employee by giving him/her more time off to spend with their family or personal time. From a law enforcement perspective more time away from work gives the officer a longer "weekend", thus providing the potential for additional employment (extra jobs). Additional employment assists the officer in supplementing his/her income, which can improve the officer's quality of life. Fewer days spent at work means less time driving to and from work. With today's fuel costs

being greater than \$2.60 per gallon, this (12-hour shift) in and of itself provides the employee some income supplementation by saving money spent at the gas pumps.

A 40-hour workweek calculates to 2,080 hours worked per year, not including vacation time (Shiftwork Solutions, 2005). This is accomplished by working either 260 8-hour shifts, or 208 10-hour shifts, or 173.3 12-hour shifts (Shiftwork Solutions, 2005). Regardless of the length of each shift the actual hours spent at work is the same. The advantage to the employee working the 12-hour shift is the number of days actually spent at work per year. Fewer days or shifts worked per year equals a greater number of days or more time for leisure. For example, an employee that works Monday through Friday knows that he/she has five days before his/her next opportunity for leisure when the alarm clock sounds on Monday morning. An employee that works a 12-hour shift knows that he/she only has three or four days prior to his/her next leisure opportunity when his/her week begins, coupled with the fact that he/she also realizes that this upcoming time off will last for three or four days.

With most traditional policies regarding sick time, vacation time, etc. being written in relation to an eight-hour shift administrators might have to create new ways to calculate these benefits accrued by the employee (Shiftwork Solutions, 2005). If the administrator fails to modify these policies the result can be financially devastating for the company/department (Shiftwork Solutions, 2005). This issue can easily be resolved by calculating the employees accrued sick, vacation, etc. per hour worked rather than per workweek. Anyone familiar with home improvement projects or carpentry work in general can relate to the phrase, "Measure twice and cut once" (Shiftwork Solutions, 2005). This also rings true concerning a move from eight-hour shifts to 12-hour shifts

because employees are frequently hesitant to switch to longer shifts however, once they make the move they rarely look back (Shiftwork Solutions, 2005). “We (League City Police Department) voted on whether to move to eight-hour shifts or remain on 12-hour shifts at the end of 2005, and the officers voted to keep the twelve (12) hour shifts” (S. Arena, personal communication, February 16, 2006). Regarding 12-hour shifts Police Chief Michael Saudino of the Emerson, New Jersey Police Department said, “I’m happy they’ll give it a try. The guys really wanted it. It’s a healthier schedule for them” (Yellin, D. 2005a). Chief Saudino continued by stating, “In speaking with other chiefs, experience has shown that overtime and sick time has decreased since going to the 12-hour schedule” (Yellin, 2005a). It is common knowledge among administrators that abuse of sick time often has a direct correlation with low morale. If an officer has a negative morale issue he/she tends to often call in sick to avoid the work environment; the source of said officer’s low morale.

Secondly, 12-hours shifts can assist a department with the issue of manpower. Police Chief Vincent Caruso of the Lodi, New Jersey Police Department said, “Whereas on the eight-hour schedule, the department was divided into three smaller shifts that rotated around the clock, now half the men are dispatched at once” (Yellin, 2005b, p A01). Caruso continued by stating, “On this schedule, we have more officers scheduled to work at the same time so we have a cushion if someone calls in sick and we don’t have to replace him...I have not seen any drawbacks from this schedule” (Yellin, 2005b, p. A01). An article written on December 28, 2005 in *The Record* seconded this thought; “With 12-hour shifts, more officers are on duty at a given time. The advantage is if one officer calls in sick, there should still be enough working without calling someone in on

overtime” (“Good Deal,” 2005). Basically, rather than dividing a department by three, the 12-hour shift permits the department to be divided by two with regards to patrol. If a department has 300 officers assigned to the patrol division theoretically 100 officers will be assigned to one of three shifts on an eight-hour schedule. With 12-hours shifts these 300 officers are now assigned to one of two shifts providing each shift with a pool of 150 officers. The 12-hour shift can be extremely beneficial from a management aspect. There are only two shifts to be accounted for by administration. More importantly, the expanded daily shifts require only two shifts to work a 24-hour period, creating a personnel surplus (Walker, 2006). This surplus allows managers to accommodate the peak times by deploying an additional shift to cover these times (Walker, 2006) With 12-hour shifts management also has a larger pool of officers from each shift to assign more officers as a “lap-over” (Walker, 2006) In other words, using the above-mentioned numbers, management has 150 officers assigned to days and 150 officers assigned to nights. With a four shift matrix (two night shifts and two day shifts) management has a pool of 75 officers per shift. This allows for several officers to be assigned as a “lap-over”, which in turn results in less officers having to work overtime in order to complete a call that was assigned late in the shift. This is beneficial to both management and the officers themselves, by allowing officers to secure on time thus improving morale, and saving management unnecessary overtime expenses. The additional manpower on each shift is paramount in improving morale as well.

Emerson, New Jersey Police Chief Michael Saudino is quoted as saying (regarding the switch to 12-hour shifts), “We found that with the current schedule, there were 153 times where guys had to work double shifts. Under the new schedule, there



will be a policy that they can't work eight hours before or after their shift starts and ends. That is addressing the fatigue issue" (Yellin, 2005a, n.p). Research suggests that officers who work 12-hour shifts should be able to perform about as well as those on eight-hour shifts if they are in good health (Yellin, 2005b, p A14). Professor of Criminal Justice at Washington State University-Spokane Bryan Vila stated, "They must take special care to get adequate sleep every day during their time off, they shouldn't work longer than 12 hours in any one day, and, on average, they should work no more than 40 hours per week" (Yellin, 2005b, p. A01). This research re-affirms Chief Saudino's perspective and policy regarding the 12-hour shift. Granted, officers working 12-hour shifts might be somewhat more fatigued than those working only eight-hour shifts, but this will force them to seek rest during their off time and between shifts. This in turn places a more rested officer on the streets. With the 12-hour shift, officers will receive a minimum of three days off in a row permitting sufficient time for rest as well as family.

With an eight-hour schedule, officers have a two-day weekend to spend with family. The 12-hour schedule permits the officer a minimum of a three-day weekend for family time. More time for family activities can be a stress reliever in and of itself. According to Dan De Federicis, president of the Police Benevolent Association of the New York State Police, "The eight-hour schedule is outdated and anti-family. We've been pushing to get the other troops on a 12-hour schedule, which the troopers have found is much more conducive to family life" (Milgrim, 2006, n.p.). Another benefit for the employee working the 12-hour shift is increased vacation time, decreased sick and overtime, and more opportunity to work a second job (Yellin, 2005b, p. A14).

The 12-hour shift is also beneficial in saving the department money. The 12-hour schedule also dubbed as 3/12-has become increasingly popular in recent years, with roughly one in five departments nationwide adopting it, according to William Stenzel of the Northwestern University Center for Public Safety (Yellin, 2005a). Regarding 12-hour shifts Lodi, New Jersey Mayor Gary Paparozzi stated, "We went from \$140,000.00 in overtime costs to \$40,000.00 last year." He continued by stating, "The majority of the police are happy, and the taxpayers are getting the benefits. Much of the overtime dilemma stems from officers having to work extra hours due to a late call, in other words a call that was generated near the end of an officer's scheduled shift. As mentioned before, implementing the 12-hour shift affords the department the opportunity to deploy the resources of several lap-over units/officers to help prevent an officer from being responsible for a late call. State police have saved millions of dollars on overtime since troopers went to 12-hour shifts last year, officials said (Gifford, 2004). The city also pays less in sick time due to the fact that statistically there's a decrease in sick time on a 12-hour shift because an officer works less days and is therefore less likely to call in sick (Yellin, 2005b, p. A01).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The goal of this research is to produce an answer to the following research question: "Are 12-hour shifts beneficial to the department as a whole, from the individual officer, to management, to the citizens?" The purpose is to establish the importance of, and need for 12-hour shifts. The author hypothesizes that this research will substantiate that not only the individual officers, but the law enforcement agencies will benefit when 12-hour shifts are implemented. The author also contends that this study

will affirm that as a result of implementing 12-hour shifts more officers are working at a given time without an increase in recruitment/manpower. Officers will also be afforded more leisure time resulting in greater morale, and the department realizes monetary benefits by reducing overtime as well as sick time, which can result in the need to hire additional officers to provide an adequately staffed shift. Having established these results through research, the author ultimately hopes that a law enforcement agency would realize the overwhelming benefits of implementing the 12-hour shift.

A survey will be constructed and distributed to the participants of the 66<sup>th</sup> Module I of the Leadership Command College (LCC) conducted at the Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute. (See Appendix 1). The survey is intended to determine: how many law enforcement agencies were currently using 12-hour patrol shifts, and if an agency was not using 12-hour patrol shifts would they consider switching to 12-hour shifts.

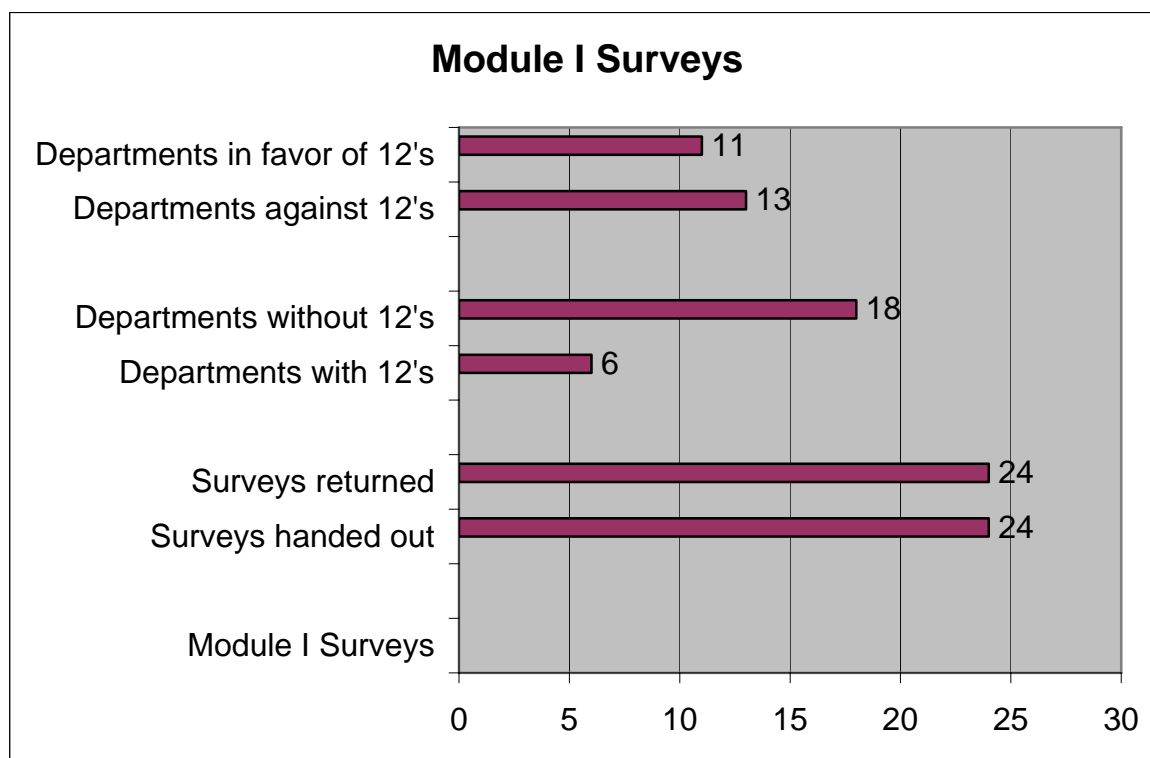
A second survey will be constructed and distributed to the participants of the 66<sup>th</sup> Module II of the Leadership Command College (LCC) conducted at the Texas Women's University Branch of the Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute. (See Appendix 2). The survey is intended to determine: how many law enforcement agencies were currently using 12-hour patrol shifts, and if an agency was not using 12-hour patrol shifts would they consider switching to 12-hour shifts.

## **FINDINGS**

The respondents of the surveys distributed at the Leadership Command College (LCC) Modules I and II held the rank of sergeant or above. Due to the high percentage

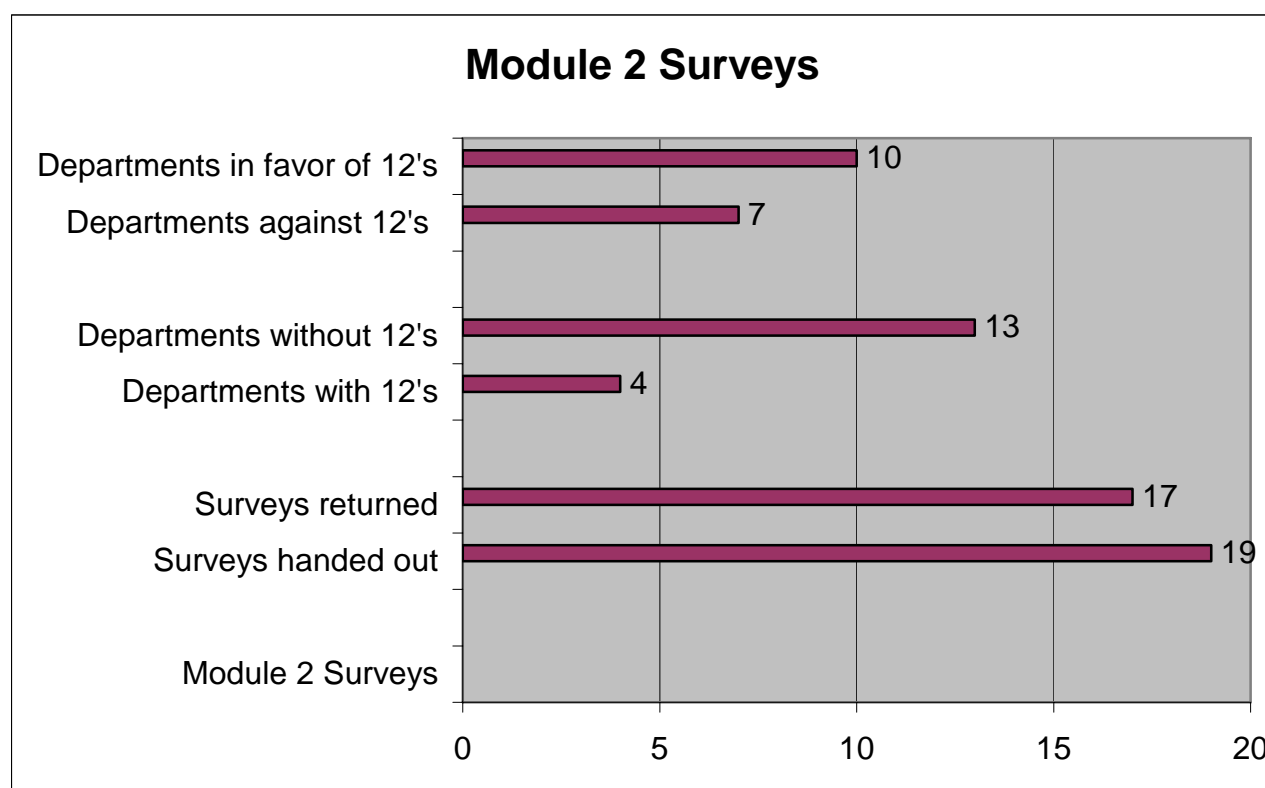
rate of surveys returned it appears that the topic of 12-hour patrol shifts is an area of interest.

Of the twenty-seven surveys distributed at Module I of the Leadership Command College (LCC), twenty-four were returned a response rate of 88%. The respondents were all supervisors representing twenty-four law enforcement agencies throughout Texas. The size of the agencies ranged from a low of 11 to a high of 3,300 sworn personnel. Regarding the twenty-four surveys returned from Module I of the Leadership Command College (LCC), six represented officers currently working 12-hour shifts and eighteen represented officers working other than 12-hour shifts. The surveys returned from the officers currently working 12-hour shifts yielded a 100% response rate in favor of 12-hour shifts. The surveys returned from officers working other than 12-hour shifts yielded 27.78% response rate in favor of 12-hour shifts and 72.22% response rate against 12-hour shifts. In other words, five of the eighteen were for 12-hour shifts while thirteen of the eighteen did not view 12-hour shifts in a favorable light. Though thirteen of the twenty-four surveyed were against 12-hour shifts and 11 of the twenty-four were for 12-hour shifts, one must keep in mind that six of the total respondents (25%) are currently working 12-hour shifts and have thorough understanding of the pros and cons of working 12-hour shifts.



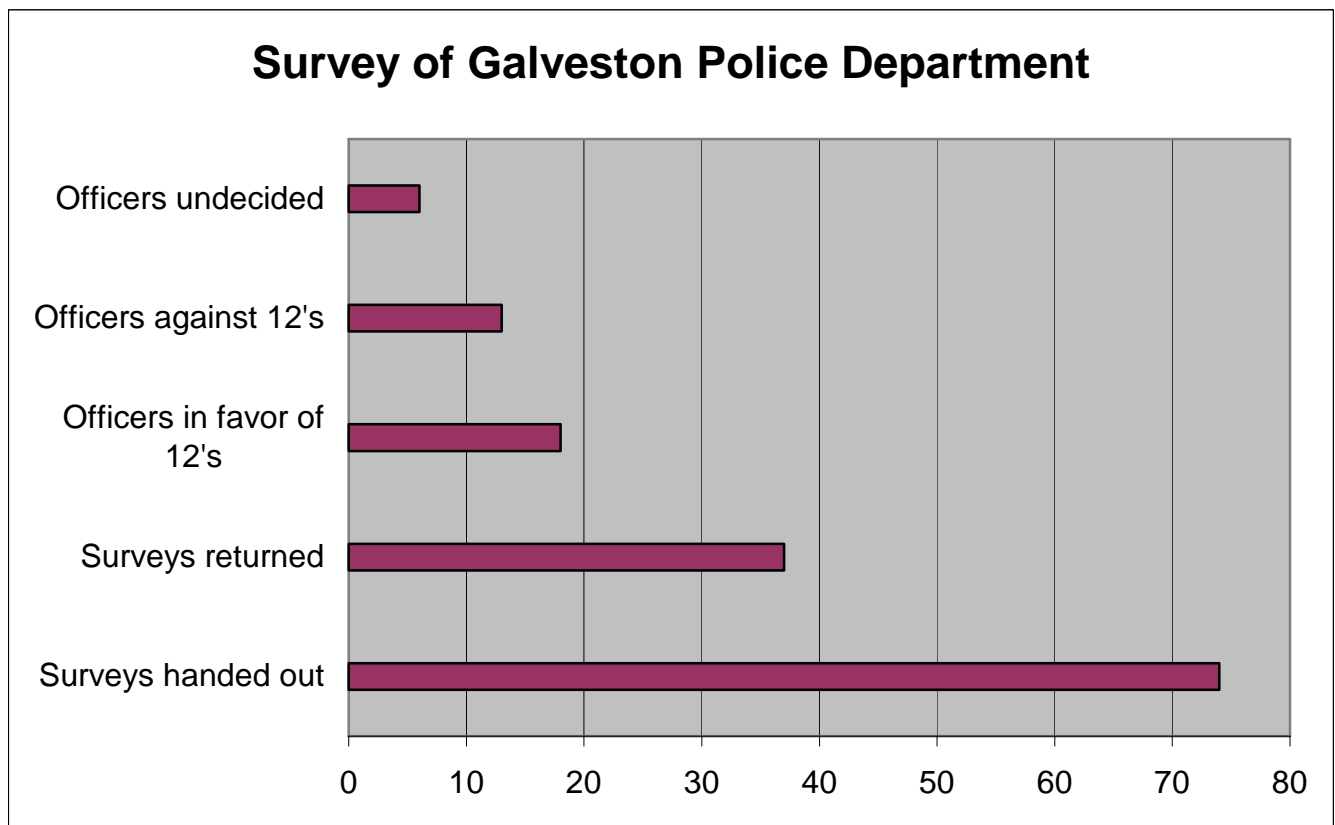
Of the nineteen surveys distributed to the participants of the 66<sup>th</sup> Module II of the Leadership Command College (LCC), seventeen were returned a response rate of 89%. The respondents were all supervisors representing nineteen law enforcement agencies throughout Texas. The size of the agencies ranged from a low of 4 to a high of 375 sworn personnel. Regarding the seventeen surveys returned from Module II of the Leadership Command College (LCC), four represented officers currently working 12-hour shifts and thirteen represented officers working other than 12-hour shifts. The surveys returned from the officers currently working 12-hour shifts yielded a 50% response rate in favor of 12-hour shifts. The surveys returned from the officers working other than 12-hour shifts yielded a response rate of 61.54% in favor of 12-hour shifts and 38.46% against 12-hour shifts. This translates to ten out of seventeen total respondents being in favor of 12-hour shifts and seven of the seventeen being against

12-hour shifts. When the results from the surveys returned from Module I and Module II are calculated together the total result yields twenty-one of the forty-one respondents (51.22%) in favor of 12-hour shifts and twenty of the forty-one respondents (48.78%) against 12-hour shifts.



Seventy-four surveys were distributed among the patrol division with the Galveston Police Department. Of these surveys, thirty-seven were returned. The Galveston Police Department is currently working eight-hour shifts and has never implemented 12-hour shifts. Regarding the thirty-seven surveys returned 48.65% (18/37) responded in favor of switching to 12-hour shifts, 35.13% (13/37) responded against switching to 12-hour shifts, and 16.22% (6/37) responded undecided regarding 12-hour shifts. Of the surveys that were distributed to the Galveston Police Department and returned in favor of 12-hour shifts, a vast majority cited improved morale and a

solution to manpower shortages as a valid reason for the change to 12-hour shifts. All the surveys combined shows that regardless of rank, being the respondents from Modules I and II of the Leadership Command College (LCC) and the Galveston Police Department patrol officers, a majority of subjects surveyed are in favor of 12-hour shifts.



## CONCLUSIONS

Present day law enforcement faces many obstacles, some of which include budgetary issues, manpower, and morale of the individual officers. The purpose of this study is to identify one manner in which to combat these obstacles; the 12-hour shift. The question confronting present law enforcement administrators is, does the 12-hour shift resolve some of these obstacles and provide agencies and communities with a more proficient and greater staffed police department? The 12-hour shift does benefit

law enforcement agencies in several ways from reducing overtime and sick time to improving officer morale and manpower. When utilized properly 12-hour shifts can save the agency money by reducing the potential for officers to work overtime. This can be done by reducing three eight-hour shifts into four fixed 12-hour shifts with three to four “lap over” officers assigned to each shift.

It is the “lap over” officer that assists in the prevention of officers working overtime, due to the fact that it is the “lap over” that is assigned the calls generated towards the end of the shift. Officers’ not having to involuntarily work overtime insures the officers will be ending their respective shifts at the scheduled time, thus increasing the potential for increased morale and family time. The 12-hour shift affords the patrol officer more time for family, friends, etc. This is evident by the number of consecutive days off upon completion of the scheduled workweek, whether these days off are fixed every pay period or rotating. The more time off given to an officer equals more “free time” for the officer. Twelve-hour shifts is a win-win-win situation for the officer, due to increased morale and time off, the administration, due to increased morale and manpower, and the city/county, due to less money budgeted for the purpose of overtime.



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